Hannibal the Fox

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Hannibal the Fox

by Marwana

Summary

The Hound Will Graham - a socially awkward loner who preferred to keep his own council unless he was physically dragged out of his fort Nola - has been summoned to the court of the Lion Queen Purnell, charged with all manner of crimes and misdemeanours. Will he get there in time, and how will he pit his wits against his accusers to escape the gallows? Will everyone else survive the attempt to persecute him? And what is the role of Hannibal the Fox in said crimes and misdemeanours?

The Of Reynaert the Fox AU no-one asked for but I wrote anyway and managed to finish just in time for Halloween.

Notes

The fox Reinaerde is pretty much the medieval, animal version of Hannibal. He is a cruel trickster who manages to talk his way out of everything he has ever done (and boy, are his actions sadistic, horrible and amusing at the same time!), he manages to turn everything around unto the accusers and he manages to get away with it too. That sounds quite familiar no?

For those who have never heard of the fable: I can really recommend it. It can be quite graphic, so if you like that go for an older version (Goethe's German version is quite good if you cannot read it in the original Diets or its Dutch/Flemish modern version). If graphic descriptions of violence is not quite your thing: any modern version will do.

Anyway, enjoy this mash-up of Van den vos Reinaerde and Hannibal!

Hannibal the Fox

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Act 1: The court day

It was on an absolute gorgeous day in March that the Lion queen Kade Purnell bid all her citizens and servants welcome to the first court day of the year. It was still somewhat chilly, and the trees were still bare of any leaves, but the ground was green, and purple, and red, and white, and yellow with the early spring flowers.

Everyone was present that beautiful day, everyone that was, but one. The hound, Will, was absent. This was not strange at all, as Will was known to be a socially awkward loner who preferred to keep his own council unless he was physically *dragged* out of his fort Nola.

However, it was his terrible luck that the first court day of the year always allowed for people to bring their complaints in front of the court. And quite some individuals had some grievance, minor and major alike, against the lone hound this year.

“The hound, Will Graham, has damaged me beyond repair!” the Honey Badger Frederick stated theatrically as he lumbered forward and into the lime-light. He raised himself onto his back legs and looked around himself pompously to check if he had the attention of everyone in attendance. He had, but the large mammal wilfully ignored the looks ranging from amused, to scorn, to boredom with the skills of someone who only wished to see his own ego boosted.

The doctor and head of the one criminal hospital the court boasted made sure those present could see the scars decorating his now hairless chest, belly and cheek before he lowered himself down again on all four legs and turned towards the queen with a dramatic twist of his paws, “he has turned the public against me when he falsely proclaimed the Hyena Abel *not* to be the infamous Chesapeake Ripper, his actions has let me to be eviscerated by aforementioned Hyena, he has blinded my own kinsmen, and he has designs on the female I am courting!”

“And by blinded you mean, he has opened their eyes to the truth and has not, in fact, physically blinded them,” Jack the Black Bear stated gruffly from where he was standing on his own two massive hind paws slightly behind the queen. He sank down with a shake of his massive head so he could glare down his nose at the psychiatrist, “Will only looked into the murder of one of *your* nurses on my command, and he concluded that the evidence showed that while Abel Gideon was the perpetrator of that particular crime, he was not the Chesapeake Ripper.”
The Honey Badger sniffed in disdain, “the Ripper had not shown himself for two years, the Hyena ticked all the boxes, he just didn’t remember.”

“So you helped him to remember?” Hannibal the Fox asked darkly amused as he too trotted forward. His shiny greyish, neatly groomed tail swished from left to right in greeting towards her highness before he sat down deftly and curled the fluffy tail around his equally neatly groomed and cleaned paws, “seems like you brought your misfortune upon yourself, doctor

Chilton. Do not go pointing fingers at people that not only cannot defend themselves, but also have nothing to do with the case. You had the Wolverine Freddie tell everyone about your *firm* conviction of the Hyena's guilt far before there was any real, convincing evidence. Dear Will was just fact-checking on the behalf of others. In fact, the Ripper himself, or herself, showed you the error of your ways not long after, if I remember correctly."

"The same with your female," the lioness Purnell said with a rumbling laughter, "you are far from the only one who has their partner chose another because he could not *satisfy* her. Your petty grievances, while they sound serious when taken at face-value, only show your own disability to deal with misfortune. Begone, before you ridicule yourself even more."

The other creatures attending the court day made sounds of amusement at her taunting words. "This is not a case for my court," the queen continued, only to be interrupted by a jaw-cracking yawn that highlighted her sharp teeth, "while you currently have my favour, be careful not to loose it with such unfounded accusations. Bring forth the next complaint!"

With one last look of dismay towards not only the lioness, but also the laughing mass, Frederick Chilton turned around himself on high paws and stomped away with a wordless grumble. Hannibal got back up on his own paws in an almost feline fashion and with another wave of his elegant tale, looped after him.

Though no one could hear what was being said, Hannibal stopped the other doctor easily and together they sat down near the edge of the back of the crowd to start a discussion on *something*.

"Graham stole the most important thing in my life!" Franklyn the chubby, dark-haired Pomeranian whined loudly as he made his way towards the queen on stubby legs. He was looking despondently around himself and his eyes started to shine adoringly, followed by his pointy ears perking up, as they fell onto the elegant and popular fox, "Hannibal was *my* friend, and he took him away from me. I found him first!"

"Oh please, spare us," an elegant Grey Crowned Crane grumbled with a haughty sniff as she puffed up the feathers around her head, "everyone knows that Hannibal Lecter is nothing more than your *therapist*. You even introduced yourself as such when we met at the operetta some weeks ago: as the patient of Hannibal. You pay him so he can help you feel like an actual canine, and not the quavering *craven* that you currently are. You are just jealous of the fact that the Fox actually likes the Hound, and that Will Graham is capable of deeds you could not even dream of. That reminds me, Hannibal dear, when will you introduce us?"

"Soon, my dear Mrs Komeda," Hannibal answered from where he had been lounging, "I have informed you before that Will is somewhat *shy*."
"Shy, like your dinner parties?" the now-named Komeda teased.
"I believe we agreed that those were a unicorn?" the Marble Fox teased right back, "but I will see what I can do."

"But I-," Franklyn started as he cowered back, completely ignored by everyone present as they enjoyed the bantering between the Fox and the Crane.
"No buts," Alana the Hare said admonishingly. She shook her own reddish fur out before she too lightly hopped out onto the open plains, "you have no say in what Hannibal does, or who

he likes to spend his time with. Hannibal is a living being with his own values and opinions, not a *thing* to play with and to discard when no longer needed. What you bring forward is not a complaint, nor is it relevant. You are wasting the time of everyone present."

The tiny Pomeranian's ears were tucked back flat against his skull and he whined sadly in apology. When no one came to his rescue, though he shot puppy eyes begging for help towards the calculating Marble Fox Hannibal who had stopped talking to look down upon Franklyn along his pointed nose and the sleek Panther Tobias alike who pointedly ignored him in favour of watching the Fox, he trudged away, his tail tucked firmly between his hindlegs.

"I was there when they came to kill my father! The Hound is a murderer. That *cur* held him fast as they shot him like *prey*," a pretty, spotted fawn spat out as she lightly stepped forward next.
"Oh please, your father was a murderer and killed nine other fawns *and* your mother," the Hedgehog Zeller said with a scoff and a wrinkled nose, firmly ignoring the pointed 'eight' stated by his team members, "I might not like the Hound, but he did his job when he made sure your father was put down directly after he had killed your mother. He saved your life, and ended the reign of the Minnesota Shrike. If you want to blame anyone for *that* death, blame either himself or the Copycat that made the call into your den that morning."

"And I have some evidence that she might actually be right," the Wolverine Freddie came forward with a flair almost as dramatically as the Honey Badger had shown before her, "I have always told you that Will Graham, the seemingly tame and docile Hound, was a vicious killer. Takes one to know one, after all. And I can prove that *he* is the Copycat Killer! I saw him last night, with his teeth around the neck of the Ferret Randall. It was only my presence that saved his life."

"Now we are talking!" the Lion queen grumbled as she sat up, her eyes fierce and hard, "considering the fact that this is the *fourth* complaint against him, I believe it is high time we brought the Hound here, is it not?"

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Act 2: Jack the Bear

"But how do we bring him out of his fort?" Abigail the Fawn asked with a vicious frown on her dainty, spotted visage, "it is located quite some distance away from the King's Road, in the middle of the wilderness. It is also guarded on all sides by the pack of mutts that are his students."

"Don't forget the fact that the fort itself is difficult to find, impossible to climb, and strongly built," the Wolverine chimed in, "strangely enough, part of it is burrowed underground. Dogs normally don't burrow."

"You would know," Jack growled as he bared his teeth as he stood up on his two hind legs and glared down on both females at once, "you have been harassing him since the very beginning. I also do *not* believe a single word of your *evidence* unless I have seen it. Will might have killed Hobbs, but he was devastated at that kill. He might be a Bloodhound, but

he does not enjoy causing death. If, and that is a large if, he had his teeth around Randall's neck, he must have had a very good reason."
"As if that was his first murder," the Wolverine said derisive, "that Hound knows too much about death and the motives of murderers. And I will show you my evidence, as soon as the Hound is brought in front of the court."

She shook out her own fur with a dismissive shrug before she said with a sound that would have been a purr had her vocal cords allowed it, "but I rather he didn't *slither* away. He has the tendency to be rather snake-like for such an insane, psychopathic individual."
"I would prefer to describe him as a Mongoose, not a snake," Hannibal stated politely, but with a certain tightness noticeable in his tone of voice, "they are predators known to dance with snakes, and I count them – and Will – as my kin."
"You would be the expert," the Wolverine said as she bared her teeth in a caricature of a smile, "you are his *shrink* after all."

"Enough," the lioness roared suddenly, before she stated more calmly, "regardless if he is guilty or not, he will need to make an appearance if only to defend himself. Jack, you work closest with him. Bring him here."
"Of course, your highness," the Black Bear said with a small bow, "I will send Miriam, the Red Panda, towards Nola. She used to be his pupil for a while, and she knows the way to his fort. She will have him here before the end of the day."

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"Hello miss Lass," the Fox's voice greeted her politely from behind and she stopped walking so he could catch up with her, before she responded, "good afternoon doctor Lecter, what can I do for you?"
"Might I join you on your journey to Will?" he asked her kindly as he smiled at her, his sharp teeth neatly tugged away behind his lips, "it has been a while since I have visited my dear friend, and Jack mentioned to me that you are working on the Chesapeake Ripper case. I would like to offer my assistance, and this seems a fortunate moment."

"Of course," she answered with some curiosity as they started walking again, the Marble Fox stayed slightly behind the Red Panda tough she did not seem to realise it, "did agent Crawford bring you up to speed on the case?"
"He shared the files he has with me," Hannibal said with almost honest ruefulness, "but I was not able to tell him anything beyond what you, Alana or even Will have already told him. Is there anything new?"

"Well, not really," the Red Panda said with a irritated swish of her own fluffed-up tail, "his last sounder was triggered by Chilton's boasts, but that one was once again a dead end."
"Sounder?" the Fox asked her curious, even as he watched the movement of her tail somewhat predatorily. She missed it from where she was walking in front of him, "that makes it sound like it is a larger animal? There was nothing about that in the files."

"He isn't," Miriam said with a slight shake of her head, "it was something Will came up with. Whoever, or whatever, the Ripper is, he sees his victims as prey, specifically as *pigs*. We haven't shared that with the larger public because we did not want to cause panic among that particular species. And it would sound like a larger animal as generally only wolves, bear and

larger felines will go after pigs, but Will is of the opinion that the Ripper is smart and, though they probably are not aware, has others do the dirty work for him. Size does not really matter, only intelligence or the ability to manipulate the situation does."

She looked at him briefly before she continued, "Mason Verger is a good example of that. That Grizzly was too greedy and gluttonous for his own good and whoever the Ripper is, he managed to trap him within a hollowed out tree and removed the wedges that held the tree open. He then made sure that the villagers stumbled upon him, with all its consequences. Mason managed to free himself from the tree, but it cost him his claws, his ears, his cheeks, and the fur on his head. He then finally succeeded in fleeing from the mob. Not only that, but apparently the killer also asked him, and I quote, if he had joined a monastery as he was so pious and his monkshood so shiny and red, but that he really should complain about whoever had given him his tonsure as he had taken away a bit too much hair. Mason survived, but barely and he has not been the same since."

"And master Verger did not know the individual who had mutilated and humiliated him so?" the Fox asked her incredulously, though he did not try to hide the satisfied and sadistically amused gleam in his eyes as he knew that she could not see it from her position slightly in front of him.
"He has not named any names, no," the Panda said with a rueful shake of her head, "but that might because he has lost the use of his tongue during his stint in the tree and he can no longer use his front paws for anything, so writing is out too. Getting a statement from him was a *challenge*."

They fell in a compassionate quiet after that, both lost in their own thoughts as they made their way forwards towards the fort Nola.

"So, nothing new beyond that?" Hannibal asked after they had walked some time in silence, "that is a shame."
"I might have some idea, and it is actually a good thing that you came after me," the smaller mammal said, "I was looking into the sixth victim as he had been treated in the hospital some time before his death. An accident with a sharp object. You were the attending surgeon that treated him. Can you tell me more about Jeremy Olmstead? He was a Macaque, fell out of a tree while hunting for lizards and fell onto his own spear. Do you remember him?"

The Fox was quiet for a short while, before he murmured, "the sixth victim? The Wound Creature?"
"Yes, that's him," Miriam confirmed, "what can you tell me about him? There must have been a reason why he had been chosen?"

"I am sorry, I cannot say that I truly remember him," Hannibal said with a shake of his head, his gaze cunning and sly as he observed her hungrily, "but he must have done something to have deserved death. Just like Mason must have done something to deserve the beating he got from the townspeople."
"I never said anything about a beating, just that the townspeople stumbled upon him," the Red Panda said with a small frown between on her expressive face, "and it is also not in the files… How did you-?"

“He was quite rude, if you want to know. Both of them were. So greedy for their favourite delight to *sin* on. So easy to lure away from safety, and the treatment of the Macaque truly was a waste of time and resourced,” the Fox said and it was only because of the fact that his voice came from too far behind her that she stopped walking, turned around and looked back. She immediately noticed that he had stopped walking long before she had and was now directly behind her. His ears were pricked forwards, he was poised with his belly low, his tail was a stiff line standing straight back from his hindquarters, and his teeth were bared. That was not however, what clued her in. It was the malice and calculated bloodlust in his eyes that did.

“You are-,” she managed to state before he was upon her with one mighty leap. He caught her heavily onto her front and they crashed down, his front paws landed firmly on her shoulders and forced them down onto the ground. His teeth locked tightly around her throat.
“Clever little Bear,” he cooed as much as he could with his mouth full. He tightened his grip as he shook her from left to right, “I think I will take your tail. It would make for such lovely shoes for my darling Will.”

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Miriam Lass, the Red Panda, was found in a well near the King’s Road days later. Her left arm and her tail were missing. Jack was livid, even more so than he had been after her disappearance, but there was nothing he could do as she could not remember what had happened to her, or what had brought her into contact with the Chesapeake Ripper in the first place.

The first thing she did after she was freed and brought in front of the court was to attack Frederick Chilton and to firmly declare him to be the one who had mutilated her so, but that is a tale for another time.

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Act 3: Beverly the Housecat

When Miriam Lass did not only failed to return the same day she had been requested to get Will, but they were instead *gifted* a furless and skinless paw and left arm, they feared the worst. It was clear that she had fallen into the paws of the Chesapeake Ripper.

“See, I told you that Hound is a deranged murdered! This proves that he is not only the Copycat, but also the Chesapeake Ripper himself!” Freddie the Wolverine crowed triumphantly, before she turned towards Jack, “and now he has disappeared, and probably killed, your favourite and most promising of lackeys. Such a shame you did not listen.”

“One can live without a paw,” Hannibal stated deftly from where he was seated next to the slumped on his behind, defeated looking Black Bear, “nor does this mean that Will was the one who *mutilated* her. There is quite some distance between here and fort Nola, after all.”

“Still, the Wolverine has a point,” queen Purnell stated as she shook out her tail before she curled it around her reclining hindquarters, “there is no smoke without a fire.”

“There is enough evidence for a trail in absentia,” the self-proclaimed journalist stated confidently.

“No, regardless of how it looks, Will the Hound has the right to hear the accusations brought against him,” Beverly Katz stated as she made her way forward on silent, dark brown and caramel paws, “besides, there is no concrete evidence. Everything there is, is circumstantial at best.”

“Than why don’t *you* get him here in front of us so the Hound can provide us evidence of his innocence?” Abigail the Spotted Fawn snapped harshly.
“I concur,” the Lioness lazing in the sun said, “Katz, bring the Hound here.”

“Me, your highness? But I am but a small Housecat, and domesticated. I am not used to the wilderness that surrounds Will’s home and I am not large enough to *drag* him here,” Beverly stated surprised, “would it not be better to send one of the larger animals?”
“No, Will trusts you, and you are smart,” the queen said, “I have faith in your ability to get him here.”

“As you wish,” the Housecat said with a grumble, “I will try to bring him here, though I have little faith of accomplishing my task.”

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She left the court almost immediately and it was known that she travelled on the road towards Nola.

Her body was found the very next day at dawn. She had been pulled apart and cut into individual layers which had been encased in vertical glass plates. When they investigated her remains, they realised quickly enough that the kidney they found inside her was not actually *her* kidney.

The size and the shape of the kidneys showed it to belong to a bird, and everyone quickly assumed that they had to have belonged to the Muralist, the Loggerhead Shrike James, as his had been missing from his body too.

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“That is the second of my subjects who has not returned alive from the legal summons they are supposed to have communicated,” the feline queen stated with an angry rumble as she stalked in front of her loyal barons, “enough is enough. We shall prepare ourselves to besiege this *fort* of his.”

“If I may, your majesty,” her impassioned and angered speech was interrupted by the polite voice of the Fox Hannibal, “Nola is not too far away from my Maupertuus along the King’s Road, and I have visited the Hound before. I am certain I can convince dear Will to join us in court. After all, every free creature has the right to a fair trail, and our own law states that three legal summons are needed before a siege and crucifixion are justified. It would not be fair to deny him his legal rights.”

“So be it,” she growled angrily as she rested herself on her hind legs, “you may bring him in front of us. We will *make* him explain before we decide his punishment for the disappearance of Miriam Lass and the murder of Beverly Katz, and whatever evidence Freddie Lounds has for us.”

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Act 4: the Process

The Fox, to the surprise of nearly everyone, succeeded in bringing the Hound in front of the court.

Both of them strolled forward over the red carpet as if they were the guests of honour, the Fox leading and haughty and smug, the Hound snarling and snapping at the Fox’s silvery hind legs and fluffy, twitchy tail as he stalked in behind Hannibal.

The difference between the two could not have been greater. The Fox was slender and neatly groomed with soft fur in tints from white to grey to black, a well taken care of tail only slightly darker than the fur on his body, a white breast and soft, pointy ears. His face stood mischievous and he appeared to be smiling in amusement. The Hound on the other hand had coarse fur coloured in shades of rust, buff and grey that stood every which way. His head and paws were strangely large and his tail was bushy. His rounded ears were pricked in irritation and his bared teeth were sharp. His eyes were an unsettling blue, not a colour one often saw when it came to canines.

They came to a stop in front of the queen and her barons and the Hound’s countenance eased back into one of grumpiness. They were quickly surrounded by the other animals present.

“Your highness, why was I made to come here?” Will asked roughly.
“Several accusations of mutilation and murder have been made,” the Lioness started delicately as she gazed down upon the Hound, “and they have pointed towards your as the perpetrator.”
“If this is about Hobbs-,” he stated with a roll of his unusual eyes, showing the whites of them in his annoyance.
“It is not,” Jack stated equally gruffly, “as everyone agrees that that culling was needed.”

The Fawn Abigail looked up in outrage, but the harsh look send her way by the Black Bear deflated her own temper.

“Than what is it about?” the large Canine asked drained as he rubbed a paw over his snout, “I was working on the Shredded Creatures case, as I was requested to by this very Court.”
“And that brought you in contact with Randall Tier?” the graceful Amur Leopard Bedelia asked him sceptical, “close enough that you were seen with your teeth around his throat?”

“Well, yes,” the Hound said with a slow almost predatory blink of his eyes, “he did attack me while he invaded my territory, after all. He formed an active threat against my pupils. But that was already a handful of days ago, and I informed Jack – agent Crawford – after it had happened. I removed his ferrety remains from my territory, as we had decided to use his nearly beheaded body as a lure for the Ripper. His pelt was found wrapped around the statue

of a Tiger the very next day, so we knew it had been found by our quarry. Lounds even wrote an *article* about this."

He turned his large head towards the Wolverine, exasperation on his face.
"She was telling tales again," the Fox chimed up softly from where he had seated himself next to the Hound as if he did not like the fact that he no longer had those lovely blue eyes in his sight, "claimed it happened during a time of Courtly Peace. She seemed to have forgotten to mention that it was already quite well-known within the court."

"I was not informed of this," Kade Purnell stated with a frown on her majestic face and a raised eyebrow as she turned towards the Black Bear, "why was I not informed of this."
The Bear cleared his throat somewhat uneasily and stated, "we – meaning myself, Will, Hannibal and Miriam – were afraid it would sing around at court and would therefore not work as the trap it was supposed to be. We only managed to hold Freddie off until after the remains were found."

"Did it at least work?" the Lioness asked with a drained sigh.
The Bear squirmed a bit uncomfortable, "it did, actually. As mentioned, only a handful of people knew of the death of Randall Tier and how that came to be. Even less people knew where his remains were left."

The queenly lioness perked up, and her ears and snout alike turned towards Jack, "you captured the Chesapeake Ripper?"
"Capture him, no," the Black Bear rumbled, "brought him in front of this court? Yes."
"Who-? Wha-? The Hound-?" nearly everyone started to blurt or shout at the same time, but one roar from the annoyed queen stopped them.

"Jack sent me a letter via a Hen Harrier the moment Miriam left court," Will stated flatly, his ears pulled back, "he did the same when Bev made her way towards me. I notified him as soon as I realised that neither had arrived within the timeframe they should have. I might not live nearby, but the King's Road is an easy one and while my home can only be reached over crooked paths, it is doable within an afternoon. There is only one other fort near the King's Road that passes close to my Nola. I might be actually within the Wilderness and near the bend roads, but there is one located just on the border."
"Maupertuus," Jack stated darkly as he lumbered forwards, "the burrow of the Fox Hannibal Lecter."

Everyone present turned towards the Marble Fox only to rear back at the feral, blood-thirsty, satisfied and proud look in those fiery, amber eyes. Even the Lioness, the Black Bear and the Wolverine had to stumble back at the sheer wicked, sadistic delight they saw in that normally so refined face of the compact mammal. Only the Hound Will remained calm and unafraid as he studied the slighter canine.

"I was wondering when you would figure it out," the Fox stated with an amused purr as he raised himself on all four of his elegant paws, "or have you always known, my dear, darling *Wolf*?"

"I suspected," the Hound admitted as he backed up a bit. He might not be afraid of the alleged killer, but he was no fool either, "and now we have the needed evidence. You are the

Chesapeake Ripper, the Copycat, and probably a handful of other monikers we have yet to find. And I am no Wolf."

"He is the Copycat? The one who murdered that other doctor? That poor, deluded Snake Georgia? The Roe Cassie?" a voice sounded from the public around them and a male Roe made his way forward, his stance aggressive.
"Hang him!" a female goat bleated out as she too came forward, "he deserves to die for his murder of my husband, whose only crime was that he noticed him during his stint as Il Monstro."
"Prepare the gallows!" a large female Reticulated Python hissed out between bared teeth.

"You might want to make sure the rope is strong enough to hold me," the Fox chimed in mockingly with his teeth bared in a grin, "might I suggested the use of snakeskin? Your daughter no longer has any need for hers, you could utilize that."

"No," Will the Hound said, his teeth bared in a nasty grin as he stared at Hannibal, an odd gleam in his magnificent, blue eyes, "if you truly want the Fox punished for what he did, make him *suffer* in the same way his victims have. *Gift* him to the Red Dragon."

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Act 5: the End Game

The Red Dragon, also known as the Tooth Fairy, was an extraordinary large monitor lizard of the Komodo Dragon species. He owned the first name to his exceptional cruelty towards other living creatures and the fact that, while his skin should normally be a dusty greyish-brown, he was more often than not covered in either fresh or dried blood which gave him the particular reddish colour he was known for.

He was especially hideous, with dark eyes glaring hatefully out into the world, his grunted words stunted by a nasty scar slitting the top part of his maw. His stinking breath, caused by the rotting remains of his victims stuck between his barely visible, serrated teeth, and the tiny fangs inside his mouth were the reason he gained the second moniker. His bite was said to be venomous, though some said it was just the rot getting to you.

He was a blight on them all, but too powerful to slay. He was also convenient if they wanted to have someone *disappear*, and though most of them wanted to get rid of the murderer nicknamed such a variety of monikers, a handful of the individuals within the Court were only too happy to use the monstruous beast to act as a executioner whenever it was needed.

The Fox Hannibal was not the first creature that would become part of its *Becoming*.

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The Hound watched on as they muzzled the snout of the Fox firmly together so he could neither speak nor bite, before they harshly tied him up so he could barely move. Everyone was too wary of the silver-tongued canine to leave him able to move *anything*. Ridiculous really, as most of the victims had been indirectly caused by Hannibal and had mainly walked

into a trap of their own making. The willy Marble Fox had just provided that last bit of motivation.

There were only a handful of creatures present now. Jack the Black Bear stood against the nearest wall and was glaring almost murderously at Hannibal. Alana the Hare was in attendance, as the Fox had been locked away temporarily in her Hospital for the Insane. No one had trusted the Honey Badger Chilton to keep him in locked away securely. With doctor Bloom came a handful of her employees, mainly well-trained apes who were strong enough to handle the unpredictable canine. Will Graham was forced to be there as well, as it was his plan to feed the willy one to the Red Dragon. No one else wanted to be near the now unmasked, feral and seemingly bloodthirsty serial killer. Not even those who had called themselves his *friends*.

“How will we get him near the Red Dragon?” Alana asked, somewhat shaky. It had become known that there was something of a deal between the Chesapeake Ripper and Margot Verger, the girlfriend of the Hare. It was also known that the Fox had promised to kill her one day, though the actual reason was unknown, “without one of us getting hurt and without him getting free.”
“We don’t,” Will stated, almost uncaringly, “we need to make sure *he* comes to us. Hannibal is just bait.”

“Bait?” the red-furred mammal asked, “bait for what?”
“The Red Dragon,” Jack answered darkly as he finally ceased glaring at the Fox to turn towards the female psychiatrist, “we get rid of two criminals at the same time. Hannibal is willy and might grievously hurt the Dragon. The Dragon is strong and will certainly hurt the Fox. Whoever survives will be killed.”
“Do I dare ask who is going to do *that* deed?” Alana asked with quivering ears.

“I will,” the one free-roaming canine present said, and he bared his sharp, sharp teeth normally hidden behind a closed muzzle in a wolfish grin. The Hare’s ears went flat against her head as she started to struggle against the instincts that suddenly told her to get away from the otherwise so docile Hound.

She shared a glance filled with trepidation and unease with the Black Bear. She had a very bad feeling about the entire situation.

oOo

The Red Dragon took the bait, as expected. The Hound did not really feel anything as he dispassionately observed as the incredible large Komodo Dragon easily slaughtered the protection detail consisting of two large bulls and three apes. The attack on the wagon had caused him to be thrown around like a ragdoll and he had fallen rather ungracefully into a ditch next the King’s Road. He had uncaringly lain down his great head, not even bothering to move into a more relaxing position than the weirdly splayed out way he had landed in.

He just as unfeelingly watched on as the Fox freed himself easily now that the cart they had been on was overturned and his outfit of chains and the muzzle binding his snout had been disturbed. Neither had been hurt during the harsh tumble, and neither had been touched by the Dragon afterwards.

Hannibal stretched each limb generously and tossed both his head and shook his tail out once he was completely free, before he hopped over the toppled wagon and looped towards the downed form of the other canine.

“Going my way?” he asked cheerfully, with a fond and tender nudge of his pointy nose against the coarser muzzle of the other.

oOo

“What do you plan to do once the Dragon is here?” the Fox asked with a curious tilt of his head as he pawed at the bottle he had saved all those years, “will you let him kill me? Or will you finally stop hiding what you truly are: not just a common dog, as everyone believes you to be, but the actual full-blooded Wolf we both know you are and help me end him?”
“I am going to sit right here, and watch as he *changes* you,” Will stated flatly as he sat down on his hunches, his coarse tail a neat line behind him.

It would always remain a mystery to the both of them if he would have done exactly that, had the Dragon not attacked at that very moment. The claws of his right front paw easily penetrated Hannibal’s side. Surprisingly, the claws of his left front paw just as easily sunk into the other canine’s cheek.

He snarled loudly in response as he worked the lizard’s claws out of his face, raised himself high on his sturdy paws and forced the horrendous creature away from him. There was nothing tame or docile in his actions as he lowered his centre of gravity and bared his fangs in a fierce, threating growl.

The Komodo Dragon turned onto Hannibal next, but the wounded Fox was ready for his attack.

The fight between the three of them was fierce, and both canines ended up with nasty, potentially deadly, wounds. However, both of them managed to stay away from the slobbering mouth and the tiny fangs and the possibly deadly venom that could be found there.

It was as the Red Dragon reared back on its two hindlegs that they finally got their opening, and the willy, tiny compared to the large bulk of the lizard, Fox managed to jump up and get a good grip on the scaly throat in front of him. Will jumped on the Komodo Dragon’s back at the same time and forced its head back and up by biting down into the side of its skull. His bulk also forced the overly large monitor lizard back down onto all four paws, giving Hannibal the needed space for movement to tear out his throat.

They immediately jumped back as the Great Red Dragon finally went down, clearly dead. The fight was over. They had won.

They stumbled towards each other as soon as they managed to get back onto shaky and wounded paws.

“This is all I ever wanted for you, Will,” the Fox murmured gently as he nuzzled his snout into the bloody fur found at the neck of the newly outed Mexican Wolf, “for both of us.”

“It is beautiful,” Will agreed as he lowered his own head onto the shoulder of the Fox both in an attempt to stabilise himself but also in honest affection.

“Run away with me,” Hannibal said softly, *lovingly*, “I know a place, far in the wilderness, where no one will think to look for us. We will be safe there. We can start a new life, just the two of us. There is enough food to sustain us, and enough open space to run. ”

oOo

From that night onwards, the general mood at the royal court could be only described as tense, though some relieve and some smugness could also be found by certain individuals. All they had found at the secret, *second* hideout the Fox had had was the carcass of the Red Dragon, the infamous Tooth Fairy, and a significant amount of blood that was distinctly mammal in origin.

No one had been able to find a single trace of or trail that pointed to where, exactly, the two canines had gone off to. Both Will the Hound and Hannibal the Fox had been declared as outlaws, to be captured on sight.

The Red Panda Miriam Lass was found in a well, alive but missing limbs, two days after the duo had disappeared, and her subsequent attack on the Honey Badger Frederick Chilton surprised and confused everyone. For a couple of days people actually believed that the smarmy doctor *was* the most prolific serial killer they had ever met instead of the already persecuted Fox Hannibal, but the next victim stopped the speculation pretty quickly.

The Grizzly Mason Verger was found dead in the hole he had crawled into only a handful of days later. He had been drowned into the basin he had kept his new companion, the Moray Cordell, in. Teeth marks were found in critical areas, but the water made the actual source of the bites too hard to determine. It was evident to everyone that two beings on four paws, though one could walk on two, had visited him, but the water had destroyed any distinctive marks that could identify the species of the owners of the traces. One had been slightly larger and heavier than the other. Fluffy, greyish fur was found at the crime scene. The Moray was killed on sight as he might have been the one to do the actual deed, but the murder was said to belong to the Chesapeake Ripper.

His sister Margot and her girlfriend Alana the Hare left immediately after and had not been seen at court since. The only signs that showed they were still alive were the letters they sent towards a select few individuals, the Black Bear Jack and the Lioness Purnell among them.

The Fawn Abigail was found near Maupertuus a week later, her throat had been ripped out but nothing had been eaten and no one had taken any hungry *bites* out of her. It was clear from the still somewhat wet blood that shone a deep red that she had not been dead for long.

The Amur Leopard Bedelia was found last. Her body was untouched and untainted, if one did not count the partially dinned upon remains of the missing leg laying skilfully cooked on the table. Her fur was neatly groomed until it shone elegantly, and she was laying peacefully on a splendid cushion in her equally luxurious house. She too, had not been dead for long before she had been found. Her neck had been snapped by a forceful bite just below the attachment

of the head to the rest of the body. Ironically, it was normally the place where the Leopard would grip her own prey before she would kill them.

Neither Will nor Hannibal, nor any trace of them, was ever seen after.

The end

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